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AMERICAN,
LOOK INTO
YOUR HEART!

by

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1917

NATIONAL SECURITY LEAGUE

31 PINE STREET

NEW YORK CITY

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Conf.
Conference Comm. on
National Preparedness
Jl. 18-47

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AMERICAN, LOOK INTO YOUR HEART!

TO you, whose forbears broke this continent to the plough and set up in it a free people, I address myself.

I appeal to you for the restoration of the ideal of patriotism which years of tawdry misuse have made almost obsolete, and I plead for your cheerful acceptance of the obligations of patriotic service. You and I pride ourselves upon our being of the stock that founded this republic; have we not ceased to demand of ourselves that we repeat even in small measure the services we are so fond of asserting our ancestors rendered it?

Our flag, of which we sing like braggarts, cost those who first raised it their sweat and their blood. Do we recall this when we arise to our feet at sound of the national anthem? Do we recollect that the flag is the symbol of *their* sweat, spent when our ancestors cut from the forests *our* homes, and of *their* blood, shed when they wrested *our* liberties from their oppressors?

I doubt it, for the flag has been our boast, not our inspiration. We flaunt the flag in token of our self-styled greatness, with never the thought that a flag is but a sorry rag of pretense unless it be the testament of the fearless devotion of a people for a cause. *Are we fearless? Are we devoted? Have we a cause? Have we a flag? Is our flag but a rag?* These questions you and I must answer in deeds; they may not be answered in words.

We are the descendents of patriotic forbears, but are we in turn

bequeathing to our descendents a record of our own patriotism? To arouse the tang of patriotism in their blood must your children and mine pass over us? Must they go back half a century, a century, or a century and a third for something to be proud of?

If you say the work is finished, that now there is no need for patriotism, History replies: *The work of patriotism never is finished; when it lags your country suffers, when it ceases your country becomes extinct.*

And Truth adds: *Your country now is in sore straits — in sore straits because your patriotism has been a sham patriotism, a thing of words instead of actions, of blatant phrases instead of devoted thought, instead of personal service, instead of self-sacrifice.*

You and I brag of our history, our country, our wealth, our virtue, our greatness. We talk loudly of the Flag of the Free, and we wave it and shout. Then, filled with the

pride of '76, we rattle our flintlocks, shake our fists at Europe, and go back to our work and amusement.

Such patriotism is sham, all sham!

It merely is the froth that foams off a people rotten with individual selfishness, with sectional prejudice, with class jealousy, and ignorant of the world; a people of petty states that have not become a nation, who lack wholly that sacred solidarity of subconscious thought called a national spirit. Where is there among us that yearning for country which impels one to give himself without barter to the flag that is over his head, and forbids him to snatch from it contemptible advantages that can be got without cost?

We take, we never give; we demand that the flag shall protect us, but we hesitate, we refuse, to protect the flag. The flag must give to us shelter and wealth, and the vanity of believing ourselves a great and a glorious people. But

we must not be asked to give aught to the flag of service, of money, of anything.

The American does not wish to be burdened with the flag, so he hires a few men to haul it up in the morning and down at night. And upon these he shoulders all of his duties of practical patriotism. Call him unpatriotic and he knocks you down ; set him at a patriotic task and away from it he rushes, whistling the Star Spangled Banner.

But patriotism such as this no longer is to be tolerated. The time has come when the patriotism of words is a dangerous thing unless it be backed by the patriotism of action, by the forethought and wisdom which acquire the power to make words good. The times have ceased to be in careless mood. The nations are dangerous; they are bleeding and hungry, and we are fattening upon their misfortunes. The ink of diplomacy no longer

is black, it is red; and it is no safe act for any nation to claim even its rights without having in hand the means to enforce them.

This brings a new duty into your life and my life, the duty of active preparation for the defense of our rights and our land. Shall we be weak, and shirk it? Shall we attempt to escape its cares and its costs, and let come what may? Shall we temporize, and let Utopian dreams delude us into the belief that the self-righteous may as safely depend upon the defensive value of defenselessness as upon ships and men? Only the unsanity of a sexless fanaticism has answered to this, Yes! But upon such a reply the extinct peoples cry out: *No nation ever was builded or preserved by the unmanly disciples of Impotence!*

No, there is but a single path open to our safety—to the moral security which comes of the courage and determination to enforce the right, and the material security

which lies in the ability to enforce it. To pursue that path we must apply the cautery of patriotism each to his own instincts of selfishness, until there shall be yielded gladly by each the uttermost national service of which he is capable, a service for which no return other than the common good is sought.

If such be the spirit of a people that its individuals will make the sacrifices necessary to insure the safety and wellbeing of the whole, then the essentials of national self-preservation have been achieved. The means needed to carry these into effect will spring naturally into being. If we Americans are to remain a great Power, secure in our liberties, our rights, and our territory, it is upon our unfaltering acceptance of the principles of universal patriotic service, and their translation into the daily thought and action of our lives, that we must wholly depend. Upon nothing less ever was founded great nationality.

But do we desire great nationality? *I do, do you?* Are we ready and willing to make the sacrifices necessary to its upbuilding? *I am, are you?* Shall we renew in ourselves for the purpose the old fiber that cleared this continent, and drove out of it our enemies? *I will, will you?* Shall we pledge ourselves to endure, regardless of cost? *I am pledged, are you? Decide, for this is the critical hour!*

American, dare you look into your heart and not answer?

HENRY A. WISE WOOD



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